

**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of  
Connecticut  
Before the Public Health Committee**

March 8, 2013

**In Opposition to**

**Proposed S.B. No. 262 AN ACT REQUIRING NOTICE BY PSYCHIATRISTS CONCERNING  
PATIENTS THAT MAY POSE A THREAT TO THEMSELVES OR OTHERS**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Daniela Giordano and I am the Public Policy Director for Adults, State and National matters with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Connecticut. NAMI Connecticut is the state affiliate of NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all those affected by mental illness. NAMI Connecticut offers support groups, educational programs, and advocacy for improved services, more humane treatment and an end to stigma and economic and social discrimination. We represent individuals who actually live with mental illness and parents and family members of individuals living with mental illness. I am here today on behalf of NAMI Connecticut to oppose Proposed SB 262.

This bill would require psychiatrists (and potentially other mental health providers) to notify authorities when they believe that a patient in their care is a threat to him or herself or to someone else.

We oppose this proposal because case law already covers the duty to warn identifiable potential victims of harm and allows mental health providers to breach confidentiality if they believe there is a direct threat of harm. Clinicians also have the option of admitting someone to the hospital via an emergency certificate if they believe him or her to be a danger to self or to others. Police assistance may be utilized under these circumstances. Expanding notification to authorities beyond these specific circumstances would undermine the confidentiality and trustworthiness between the client and the mental health professional. Trust is the most important tool mental health professionals have when working with the people in their care and any overt breach of confidentiality would be deterrence for individuals to seek treatment. Rather, we must preserve an environment where individuals feel safe to work through their most personal thoughts and feelings with the professionals they seek out for this express purpose.